

[54] **AUTOMATED CUSTOMER INTERFACE
FOR SERVICES INVOLVING DROP-OFF
AND PICKUP**1317306 5/1973 United Kingdom .
1423135 1/1976 United Kingdom .
1604040 12/1981 United Kingdom .[76] Inventors: David W. Lohrey, 339 Golden Gate
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235/383; 235/385; 340/825.35[58] Field of Search 235/381, 380, 383, 385;
340/825.35; 379/91, 144; 364/401, 403[56] **References Cited****U.S. PATENT DOCUMENTS**

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1316453 5/1973 United Kingdom .[57] **ABSTRACT**

A system for automated, attendant-free customer interface for services such as laundry and dry cleaning processing or rental of items such as videotapes enables customers to order services and pick up processed orders using a general purpose, undedicated credit card. A retrieval device upon appropriate command retrieves a customer's processed order and brings it to a customer interface panel door, which opens to enable the customer to pick up his processed order. Included in the customer interface panel are a card reader for reading the customer's credit card, a display for presenting information and instructions to the customer, a menu of services for selection by the customer and a keyboard or other input device to select desired services. A printer is included for printing a receipt and/or a transaction record. The system includes a computer at each remote machine facility outlet for handling functions associated with the credit card reader, instructing the retrieval device to retrieve orders, for operating a display, for handling the customer input device, and for creating a transaction record. The general purpose computer can also provide for networking between the central plant and a larger number of remote automated customer interface facilities, and a telephone, modem and auto dialer preferably are included at each automated facility for computer communication with the central plant.

39 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets